

## FIRST ISOLATION OF SOLDADO VIRUS IN SOUTHERN FRANCE

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Soldado virus, a *Nairovirus* of the Hughes serogroup transmitted by ticks associated with seabirds, is one of the most widely distributed arboviruses in the world (1, 4). During the past ten years (1977–1986), we have studied by virological methods thousands of *Ornithodoros* (*Alectorobius*) *maritimus* ticks from both the North-western and the Southern coasts of France, including Corsica. From Brittany, at least 111 strains of Soldado virus have been characterized among 190 viral strains so far isolated, whereas only one strain of this virus was obtained recently (1986) from the South. Suckling mice and Vero cells were used throughout for virus isolation attempts.

The difference between percentages of positive ticks pools from the North (190 strains for 449 pools, or 38%) and from the South (1 strain for 119 pools, or 0.8%) is highly significant ( $p < 0.001$ ). The strain from the South was isolated (and reisolated) from the T1803 pool of 7 large engorged nymphs of *O. (A.) maritimus* collected by May 1st, 1986, in nests of Mediterranean herring gulls (*Larus cachinnans*), on Pointe Rousset, Ile de Porquerolles, "Iles d'Hyères" archipelago (43°N – 6°10'E). It was identified by CF tests using 8 CF units of T1803 antigen and a number of antibodies to members of the Hughes serogroup.

	CF titre to T1803 antigen	Homologous CF titre
Antibody to:		
Hughes	< 8	128
Soldado (Trinidad)	32	128–156
Farallon	< 8	256
Puffin Island	< 8	128
Punta Salinas	< 8	128–256
Sapphire II	< 8	128
Zirqa	< 8	128
Soldado (Cap Fréhel, T101)	128	256

According to these results, the T1803 strain was classified as a "Old World" variant of the Soldado virus as previously defined (4). At the present time, we have no explanation for the striking difference between isolation rates in the North-West and the South of France. Neither the bird host of the tick (*L. cachinnans*) nor the vector itself may render an account of this phenomenon, because nine strains of three different viruses: Soldado, Essauira and Kala Iris, have been isolated by our Laboratory in Morocco from *O. (A.) maritimus* parasiting *L. cachinnans* gulls (2, 3, 5).

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## References

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